

For Military Media

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## **From the top down; redesigning the future**

By Sgt. Edward Eagerton

**JOINT BASE ELMENDORF-RICHARDSON, Alaska**— As the adage goes, “you cannot teach an old dog new tricks,” but that is exactly what the Army Communities of Excellence Strategic Execution Course is designed to do. Approximately 30 Guardsmen from Alaska, Hawaii, Idaho and Mont. attended a five-day course in Jan. to learn how to develop a strategic plan and communicate it to all levels of their organizations.

“They’re training the next generation of leaders,” said Maj. Chad Daniels, a performance assessment officer with the Business Transformation Office, National Guard Bureau. “It really is a culture change. With the fiscal environment being the way it is and money going away, we have to look at the way we’re doing things; we have to look at how to do our processes more efficiently.”

The senior and mid-level leaders that attended the Strategic Execution course used the case-study of a private-sector company as an example of a failing business model. During the class, they were taught a set of tools to analyze that business model and develop a strategic plan to affect positive change for the company.

“Fourteen years ago, Maj. Gen. Roger Schultz from the National Guard Bureau felt there was a close connection between military planning, when it comes to running an organization, and corporate planning,” said Skip Ulmer, a consultant and trainer for the Strategic Execution course from Simon Says Consulting in Denver, Colo.

Through analyzing where an organization is, and figuring out where they want to go, the students were then challenged to prioritize what steps to take and how to communicate that plan to their organization.

“You have to do a strategic scan,” said Colin Dunn, a consultant and trainer for the course from Colin K. Dunn and Associates out of Woodbridge, Va. “You have to identify what your problems are internally and what your threats are externally. You then narrow those down to the most important things to address and make a plan. Then you take a step back and make sure everybody in the organization is on board with that vision.”

One of the challenges in communicating this vision is that the National Guard is mostly made up of traditional Guardsmen who drill for one weekend a month and two weeks a year during their annual training.

Outside of drill weekends and annual training, Guardsmen typically pursue careers and education within the civilian sector. During National Guard training, their individual missions and training revolve around maintaining proficiency in their skill-sets. So how would a traditional Guardsman understand the larger picture of an organization without the continuity of doing their service-related job every day?

"There needs to be involvement, and not just from the headquarters or senior leadership, but from throughout the entire organization," said Army Col. Jeff Ireland, the chief of staff for the Montana National Guard. "If we can get the employees excited and show them that what we're doing is going to help us help them, then there's going to be success."

Leadership and those tasked with redesigning the future are an often changing and evolutionary element of the military. By involving all levels of the organization in the strategic planning process, the collective vision of an organization gains a sense of continuity that could not exist without a solid communication in place to instill those core values.

"I can take this process of strategic planning and apply it to my foxhole right now," said Maj. Tim Brower, assistant professor of military science at the University of Anchorage Alaska Army Reserve Officer Training Corps program, Alaska Army National Guard. "By doing that, it's going to make the ROTC program better. It will be nested with the guidance that I receive from higher levels of command, and in turn, will be conveyed to the next generation of leaders."

According to Dunn, the last step of the process involves a sustainment phase that challenges the organizations to continually reassess their progress and adjust their directions as the situations change.

"Where do we want to go in the future?" asked Dunn. "What does the promised land look like? What compelling vision can we cast that shows people where we're going? That is so critical, because most people come to work every day wanting to be a part of something bigger than themselves. That's the strategic plan."

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## **PHOTO CUTLINES**

### **140106-Z-MW427-004**

Maj. Gen. Thomas H. Katkus, adjutant general of the Alaska National Guard, gives a welcome speech at the start of a Strategic Execution course at Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, Jan. 6. Approximately 30 National Guardsmen from four states attended the Strategic Execution course, which is a five-day course designed to teach senior and mid-level leaders how to create a strategic plan to shape the direction of their organizations and communicate those plans to all levels of the organization. U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Edward Eagerton

### **140106-Z-MW427-015**

Skip Ulmer, a consultant and trainer for the Strategic Execution course from Simon Says Consulting in Denver, Colo., gives a lecture during the course on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, Jan. 6. Approximately 30 National Guardsmen from four states attended the Strategic Execution course, which is a five-day course designed to teach senior and mid-level leaders how to create a strategic plan to shape the direction of their organizations and

communicate those plans to all levels of the organization. U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Edward Eagerton

**140109-Z-MW427-061**

Chief Master Sgt. Daniel S. Siekawitch, management and program analyst, Joint Forces Headquarters, Alaska Air National Guard, reads course materials during the Strategic Execution course held on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson, Alaska, Jan. 9. Approximately 30 National Guardsmen from four states attended the Strategic Execution course, which is a five-day course designed to teach senior and mid-level leaders how to create a strategic plan to shape the direction of their organizations and communicate those plans to all levels of the organization. U.S. Army National Guard photo by Sgt. Edward Eagerton